

Congressman Bright to House Leadership: “Listen to the People”

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman Bright delivered a speech on the floor of the House of Representatives today, urging House leadership to pay close attention to the results from Tuesday’s special election in Massachusetts. Bright said: “I’ve heard this message for quite some time when I travel across my district. People are fed up and angry, and they think that Congress and the White House are not listening to them… As we say in Alabama, this was a bellringer, and leadership needs to listen.”

You can view Congressman Bright’s floor speech [here](#).

If you are having trouble viewing the link, you can also visit Congressman Bright’s webpage at www.bright.house.gov and click on the “latest video” box in the bottom right hand corner of the homepage.

Congressman Bright’s floor statement, as prepared, is below:

On Tuesday night, the people in Massachusetts reiterated a message too often forgotten in Washington: listen to us. I’ve heard this message for quite some time when I travel across my district. People are fed up and angry, and they think that Congress and the White House are not listening to them. They think that Washington is moving in the wrong direction and is ignoring them. As we say in Alabama, this was a bellringer, and leadership needs to listen.

The current state of health care reform epitomizes their disgust. We can all agree that health care is a concern and needs to be reformed, but what good is health care reform if people don’t have jobs? If they can’t feed their children? Pay their bills? I’ve heard this message from

my constituents and know our primary focus must be on the economy.

I'm not alone in my opinions. Elected officials from across the country and across the political spectrum are hearing the same comments. "Congress needs to focus on the economy. The health care bill is too massive. I don't like the process," are common refrains.

Closely rivaling Americans' concerns about the economy is their wariness of federal spending. Too often in the past, Congress was not held accountable by the people. But trillion dollar deficits as far as the eye can see have awoken them, and rightfully so. For our children and grandchildren's sake, we must get our fiscal house in order.

To be sure, these challenges are not easy to solve. Improving the economy in the middle of a budget crisis is a tall task, but we were sent to Washington by the people to be their voice and tackle these immense challenges.

There is plenty of blame to go around for our current condition. Democrats need to recognize that ambitious plans to address longstanding priorities such as health care, energy, and other spending initiatives must be postponed if the will of the people disagrees with this agenda. And Republicans must remember that they were in charge when hundreds of billions of dollars in deficits were common even when our economy experienced brighter days. History can't simply be swept under the rug.

There are some simple solutions that will help solve some of these problems. First, we must reinstate statutory pay-go. Statutory pay-go budgeting rules were in place when we experienced record budget surpluses in the late 90s. Pay-go rules are the only proven way for Congress to keep spending in check.

Second, we should pass a fiscal commission- and pass it cleanly- that will force Congress to act on legislation to reduce excessive long-term government spending. Support for some form of a fiscal commission spreads across party lines. But too often, leadership of both parties ignores these common sense solutions. Let's come together, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans, to do the work of the people.

In the coming months, leadership needs to heed the calls of their own constituents and people around the country. They need to listen to the good ideas of people in both parties, and especially from the moderates who are willing to listen to and to work with the other side of the aisle.

Let's put our heads together and fix the economy while not breaking the bank. Let's find smart and innovative solutions, such as the AMERICA Works Act and the Small Business Start-Up Savings Accounts Act that will help get our economy back on track. Let's help small businesses, and focus on improving Main Street and not just Wall Street. Let's extend the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts to give families continued assurance that the federal government won't be asking any more from them in these trouble times.

And while we're addressing these problems, let's get rid of some of the things that have divided us in the past. Let's stop using such harsh partisan rhetoric that serves little purpose other than to undermine the faith that the American people have in both parties. Let's sit down and thoroughly debate issues and not rush to pass a bill simply for the sake of doing "something". Let's open the doors so the public can see the legislative process. And finally, let's stay focused on the issue for which we have a real mandate: improving the economy.

These are lessons we should all take away from what the people- our constituents- are saying. I hope leadership and the White House are listening. It's not too late to change course, but we can't continue down our current path.